

better. She has been the jewel of my congressional operations and the truest friend to the people of southern and eastern Kentucky.

My wife, Cynthia, and I wish Sarah and her husband, Bud, many joyful and restful years of retirement with their children and grandchildren.

□ 1045

OUR MILITARY DESERVES BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, when our bravest men and women raise their hand and volunteered to defend our Nation, they defend all of her people, rich and poor, young and old, Democrat and Republican, gay and straight, Americans of all races, religions, ethnicities, beliefs, gender identities.

Our soldiers do not discriminate. They do not offer to pay the ultimate sacrifice for some Americans and not for others. Their government owes them that same courtesy, that same decency in return.

Instead, this morning, our President has told thousands of American soldiers that they will fight for us, but we will not fight for them; that their deeply personal medical decisions are somehow the public's business; that although they are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect our freedom, we will not offer them the most basic freedom in return.

Today, the President of the United States looked American soldiers in the eye and dared to question their patriotism, their courage. He doubted their commitment to their brothers and sisters in uniform. He said that our military couldn't or wouldn't stand for all of us.

To the thousands of brave transgender men and women serving today in uniform, please know that a grateful Nation does not take your service, your patriotism for granted.

You deserve better from your President. You deserve better from your government. You deserve better from your country.

THE SECRET SERBIAN RESCUE MISSION OF WORLD WAR II

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the long, dark, lamentable days of World War II, Serbians and Americans forged a bond in a secret mission that remained classified for almost 60 years.

What was known as Operation Halyard became the largest rescue operation of American airmen in history. It would not have been possible without the courage of the Serbian people.

In 1944, as the Allies advanced into fortress Europe, American bombers based in southern Italy began to strike

Germany's vital oil supplies in Romania. The 15th Air Force launched nearly 20,000 sorties into Eastern Europe to degrade Hitler's war machine. To do this, they had to fly over Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia. As many as 1,500 pilots and airmen were shot down during these dangerous flights.

Serbians who had been resisting German forces since 1941 risked their own lives to rescue American aircrews and hide them from patrolling Nazis. One of them was Serbian George Dudich, the father of Elaine Dudich, my chief of staff when I was a judge in Texas.

For months, George Dudich and the other Serbians aided downed Americans, caring for and protecting the pilots, and then smuggling the aircrews back to Allied lines.

By August 1944, hundreds of other downed aircrews were being sheltered by the Serbian guerillas. The OSS, the predecessor to the CIA, devised a plan to evacuate the Allied pilots in a daring mission coordinated with the Serbian resistance.

On August 10, unarmed American C-47s flew numerous sorties deep into enemy territory and landed at an improvised airfield built and protected by local Serbians near the village of Pranjani. By the 18th, more than 500 Allied airmen had been secretly rescued and flown back to Italy.

Here on this poster you see the Serbian resistance, along with American aircrews that had been downed, moving them to hiding from the Nazis that were patrolling the areas. For over 60 years, this bold, unbelievable secret operation was kept classified.

Our alliance with Serbia and the Serbian people goes back even further to the First World War. One hundred years ago, Serbia stood up to the aggression from the larger Austrian-Hungarian empire. We should admire such defiance against overwhelming odds.

Serbia's stand against tyranny also set events in motion that would lead the U.S. to take up the cause of freedom in Europe in World War I. That common devotion to liberty and the spirit of the Halyard mission still lives today with the close ties between the United States and Serbia.

As was the case in both World Wars, Serbia and the United States still face shared threats. We work together now to preserve each others' security. Serbian soldiers serve along with U.S. forces in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, and Serbia is a partner in keeping terrorism from spreading in Serbia and in Europe.

However, Russian propaganda efforts in the country are particularly strong and anti-Western. We must be vigilant to thwart the Kremlin's efforts to poison our relationship with Serbia.

Fortunately, Serbia's integration into the West has continued to move in spite of Russian disinformation. In 2006, Serbia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace and, in 2015, signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan with the alliance to strengthen cooperation.

Serbia has no stronger supporter for increased integration with the EuroAtlantic community than the United States. So for more than 100 years, we have been friends with the Serbian people. And as co-chair of the Serbian Caucus, along with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), I want to welcome Serbian Ambassador Matkovic and his staff to the House Chamber today.

With our shared events in Operation Halyard, our combined history, and our fight for freedom, the American people are forever grateful for those Serbs who came to America's rescue during those bleak days of World War II.

And that is just the way it is.

HONORING THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1927, which is on the floor this afternoon, the African American Civil Rights Network Act. This is to honor the sad, yet heroic struggle for civil rights in America, a struggle for those who participated in the civil rights movement, a struggle for people that were, in fact, soldiers in a war for justice and democracy.

We appropriately and regularly honor the soldiers who wore uniforms and went to Europe and Asia to defend our country, and we appropriately and properly give them benefits that they deserve for what they did to protect democracy and justice.

But what we forget is those citizens in America who had to fight their own government and their own country for those same rights of justice and democracy.

Enslaved for over 250 years, and then treated in a netherworld of segregation for 100 years, and then slowly creeping in after Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of the sixties and to this day, those who fought for civil rights deserve to be recognized as soldiers for justice and democracy, and this bill will honor their work with the Civil Rights Network Act in our country.

They used protests to gain public attention and, eventually, to spur judicial and legislative action. It goes all the way back to W.E.B. DuBois and others who fought when they weren't so popular and on television.

H.R. 1927 would establish a Civil Rights Network to commemorate and honor the history of the civil rights movement. And I want to encourage that the proposed sites include the Memphis Heritage Trail, which has applied for funding as part of that historical network.

It was in Memphis, unfortunately, in April of 1968, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was slain. Dr. King gave his last speech in Memphis the night before at the Mason Temple, the "I Have